

FINAL REPORT

**HOUSING PRODUCTION DATA COLLECTION PROCESS**

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**October/November 1999**

*submitted to*

Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG)

*by*

Baird+Driskell Community Planning

February 2000

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Housing Production Data Collection Process (July-November 1999) aimed to collect housing production data for all Bay Area jurisdictions (101 cities and 9 counties) for the period January 1, 1988 to December 31, 1998. Two requests (July 1999 and October 1999) were sent out to all jurisdictions for housing production data. After intensive follow-up, ABAG received responses from about 75 percent of all jurisdictions. An important result of the data collection process has been the establishment of a jurisdictional contacts database. However, the data provided on housing production are still hampered by lack of consistency, despite ABAG's efforts to provide a common framework and methodology.

### ***Summary of Findings***

- There has been no consistent methodology for categorizing and counting housing units
- The majority of jurisdictions lack staff, time and resources to keep regular records on housing production.

### ***Summary of Recommendations***

In order to continue its efforts to produce useable and consistent housing production data that can contribute to initiatives that will help solve the problem of decent affordable housing for all income groups in the Bay Area, ABAG should,

- Maintain and periodically distribute (also possibly, make available on-line) the jurisdictional contacts database set up during the data collection process.
- Develop clear and consistent definitions, methodology, and categories for counting housing units, in consultation with the State Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD).
- Develop a simple, easy-to-read and -to-complete form, consistent with the recommendations above, to help jurisdictions maintain regular records and meet reporting requirements in compliance with State law—Government Code §65400(b) (1) and (2).
- Sponsor workshops, short courses or even an on-line course for city officials through ABAG's Training Center on how to count and categorize housing units, keep records, prepare housing elements, meet reporting requirements, and also as a means of sharing approaches and discussing issues.
- Establish an on-line information and data clearinghouse on housing related issues for city officials and other interested individuals and organizations.

## PROJECT START UP

During the Regional Housing Needs Determination 2001-2006 process, members of ABAG's General Assembly and Housing Methodology Committee requested housing production data from all jurisdictions for the period 1988-1998 with the intention of allowing ABAG staff to (1) make an informed assessment of housing production in the Bay Area for the period 1988-1998, and (2) determine if it was feasible for jurisdictions who had come closer to meeting their housing needs to receive some form of credit for it.

The housing production data collection process started with a July 22, 1999, memo to all city, town and county managers and administrators as well as planning and community development directors asking for a contact person to be established for housing related issues in each jurisdiction. The memo also requested information (by income category) on housing production data for the period 1988 through 1998. ABAG received twenty-seven responses by the end of September 1999 (a response rate of less than 25 percent).

Baird+Driskell Community Planning was hired September 20, 1999, to follow-up and complete all tasks related to the housing production data collection process.

## PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY

At the start of the process, ABAG provided the consultants with the information received from the first round of data collection. The first task was to complete the jurisdictional housing contacts database (**Attachment A**), which involved calling each jurisdiction (about 75 calls with an additional 20 follow-up calls) that had not responded to ABAG's July 22, 1999, request.

Concurrently, the consultants prepared a second request for housing production data. The forms on which the data was to be provided were designed to be easy-to read and simple to complete. All relevant terms and definitions were provided along with the data request. The form was intended to:

- 1 Collect housing production data that was consistent across all jurisdictions for the specified period (January 1, 1988 - December 31, 1998)
- 2 Collect housing production data for both new construction and units that had been conserved, acquired or rehabilitated.
- 3 Collect housing production data by both *income category* (very-low, low, moderate and above moderate income as percentage of county median) and *housing unit types* (single family, multi-family, group quarters and second units).
- 4 Collect housing production data for units produced with and without assistance from federal, state or local programs.

The forms (**Attachment B**) were modified slightly (in terms of definitions of unit types) following testing and review by a group of five working planners and housing experts.

However, ABAG staff felt that the level of detail being requested was not required for determining housing needs numbers and would require additional effort on the part of jurisdictions. The form was accordingly modified to collapse both the various categories of housing types as well as units produced with or without assistance from federal, state or local programs *into a single number for the following income categories: very-low, low and moderate incomes.*

This revised form along with a cover letter from ABAG (**Attachment C**) was sent out on October 8, 1999, to all Jurisdictional Housing Contacts. The cover letter was also sent to city, town and county managers and administrators, ABAG General Assembly members, as well as planning and community development directors for each jurisdiction. All jurisdictions were asked to respond by October 22, 1999.

ABAG received a total of 49 responses by October 26, 1999. During this period, the consultants responded by phone and fax to about 67 enquiries.

Follow-up calls were made between October 26 and 28 to 60 jurisdictions that had not sent in any housing production data. Between October 26 and November 9 (the last date for sending in data) the consultants made another 27 calls responding to questions from jurisdictions, and sent about 10 faxes of forms to jurisdictions that had misplaced the request for information.

By November 15, 1999, ABAG had 82 responses (a response rate of about 75 percent). Of the 21 cities and 6 counties that have not yet responded, one jurisdiction (Oakley) had been incorporated in mid-1999 and an additional 5 cities and 3 counties have said they are in the process of collecting information. A summary of the responses has been included as **Attachment D**.

## MAIN ISSUES RAISED BY JURISDICTIONS

In the first round of data collection (July 1999) a common problem expressed by many jurisdictions was the lack of a common framework for categorizing and counting units. The result of the process was therefore not comparable across jurisdictions: a classic situation of counting apples and oranges. The second round of data collection (October 1999) was designed keeping this issue in mind.

During the October 1999 round of data collection, it became clear that the majority of jurisdictions rarely maintain ongoing consolidated records of housing production as there is no stringent follow-up of housing production reporting requirements by any agency. Having to produce numbers for a period of ten years would have required most jurisdictions to unearth data from a number of different sources. The general consensus was that the process could take between two to three weeks for a full-time staff person familiar with housing issues, which most jurisdictions could not spare as they were already short-staffed. Most cities reported doing housing production data collection only during preparation of their Housing Element. The combination of lack of staff and no

record-keeping has resulted in about 12.5 percent of jurisdictions that responded not providing complete information (and in three cases, no information at all).<sup>1</sup>

Another problem faced by a little over 10 percent of all jurisdictions is a lack of staff people that understand housing related issues. ABAG staff and consultants have had to walk city staff through the data collection process. Some jurisdictions have housing offices, which many smaller cities cannot afford.

## FINDINGS

- 1 There was no consistent methodology for counting housing units. This point comes up repeatedly. The Bay Area Council's attempts to put together a housing inventory in May 1999 were hampered by the same issue.
- 2 An overwhelming majority of jurisdictions do not keep consolidated records of housing units produced either through new construction or through acquisition, rehabilitation and conservation.
- 3 Most jurisdictions lack the resources to have staff dedicated to understanding and following housing issues, which has led to housing—a critical issue in the Bay Area—not receiving the attention it should. About 10 percent of all jurisdictions had assigned staff members who were not familiar with any aspect of housing to respond to housing related issues.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings we would recommend that ABAG:

- 1 Maintain and periodically distribute to all ABAG members the jurisdictional contact database (**Attachment A**) that has been set up to establish a contact person for housing related issues, in particular the regional housing needs determination process, in each jurisdiction.
- 2 Develop a clear and consistent definitions and methodology for counting housing production, which takes into consideration new units; acquisition, conservation, and rehabilitation of existing units; different types of units; and units affordable to different income categories. The initial form prepared for the October 1999 round of

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<sup>1</sup> Summary of respondents providing incomplete or no data, and their reasons:

- One jurisdiction said they could not comply with request for information due to lack of staff and available data (Benicia)
- Two Jurisdictions sent in forms with number of units as “zero” due to lack of available data and no records (Martinez, Albany)
- Three jurisdictions sent in incomplete forms due to lack of available data (Hillsborough, Milpitas and Burlingame)
- Three jurisdictions sent in data for assisted units only (Antioch, Marin County, and Dixon)
- One jurisdiction sent in data only for new construction (Danville)
- TOTAL number of respondents with incomplete/no available data: 10

data collection (**Attachment B**) offers a good example of a consistent methodology that applies across all jurisdictions in the Bay Area.

- 3 Develop definitions and methodology in consultation with the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) so as to make it more useful and consistent with HCD's reporting and Housing Element requirements.
- 4 Develop a simple, clear, easy-to-read and -to-complete form, consistent with the recommendations above, to help jurisdictions keep regular records on an annual basis and to satisfy reporting requirements in compliance with State law—Government Code §65400(b) (1) and (2).
- 5 Sponsor workshops, a short course or even an on-line course to educate city officials and planners on housing related issues, using methodology developed by ABAG. It would also assist officials to keep consistent records, prepare housing elements, share approaches, identify potential solutions and so on. This could be done through ABAG's Training Center and could, perhaps be linked with ABAG's update of the *Blueprint for Bay Area Housing*.
- 6 Develop an on-line clearinghouse for housing-related issues where city officials and other interested individuals or organizations could find the information that is not available today: a consistent methodology to count units and a clear form on which to report data collected. Ideally, annual housing production data reported by jurisdictions should be made available on-line.

**ATTACHMENT A**

**Jurisdictional Contacts Database**

**ATTACHMENT B**

**Housing Production Data Collection Form, *Version I***

**Prepared October 1999**



**ATTACHMENT C**

**Housing Production Data Collection Form, *Final Version***

**Sent to all jurisdictions October 8, 1999**

## **ATTACHMENT D**

### **Summary of Responses**